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1961/02/08

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: AFXPD-PL-CP

8 FEB 1961

SUBJECT: Long-Range Threat of Communist China (U)

TO: AFCCS

1. (S) In response to your request (Atch 1) that the Air Staff should be having a look at the long-range threat of Communist China and what the U.S. and Air Force strategy should be with respect to this development, the following information is forwarded:

a. Long-range intelligence estimates indicate that Communist China will probably become a nuclear power within 10 years. NIE 13-60 states that the CHICOMs probably will first detonate a nuclear device sometime in 1963, although it could be as early as 1962. (The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Air Force, believes that this development may occur in late 1961.) In addition, the subject NIE forecasts CHICOM production of BADGER aircraft possibly beginning in 1961, and possession of a substantial number of jet medium bombers by 1965.

b. The timing and effects of CHICOM acquisition of a substantial nuclear weapons capability and adequate delivery systems will depend upon the degree of Russian assistance. Without sizable Russian assistance, it is unlikely that Red China could develop nuclear weapons and long-range delivery systems of any magnitude before the end of this decade.

c. If the Russians provide the Chinese with nuclear weapons, they most certainly will do everything to insure that the weapons remain under Russian control. Under this situation, with respect to nuclear capabilities, the United States would still be faced with a monolithic Sino-Soviet Bloc. This monolith, however, will be subject to future cracking, when Red China attains an independent nuclear weapons capability.

2. (S) At the present time, it appears that the national strategy, and therefore Air Force strategy, required to meet the CHICOM threat, should evolve through three phases. In PHASE I, Communist China will have exploded nuclear devices but will have few, if any, nuclear weapons and delivery systems. In PHASE II, the CHICOMs will have a considerable nuclear weapons and delivery capability for use in Asia but will pose no direct threat to the U.S. In PHASE III, the CHICOMs will have a capability to attack directly the United States. According to current intelligence, the CHICOMs, by themselves, could reach PHASE III only after 1970.

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3. (S) PHASE I - Communist China has exploded nuclear devices but has few, if any, nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

a. During this period, the Chinese Communists will exploit their "nuclear capability" for political and psychological purposes. CHICOM propaganda will emphasize this as additional proof that Red China is a major world power.

b. To bolster non-Communist Asia and to reaffirm U.S. determination to honor its treaty commitments, U.S. strategy should:

(1) Encourage selected Asian nations, e.g., Japan, India, and Taiwan, to build up their nuclear air defense forces to meet the threat of possible CHICOM nuclear aggression. The long run aim would be to build up a non-Communist Asian country to offset possible CHICOM dominance.

(2) Develop a nuclear-sharing program which will provide defensive nuclear weapons to selected allies and technical assistance to countries that desire to achieve their own nuclear capabilities.

(3) Begin establishment of a strategic vise by locating offensive missiles and quick-reacting aircraft in areas where they pose an obvious threat to China. Australia, Alaska, and U.S. possessions in the PACOM area should be considered. Australian participation is particularly important to indicate Free World solidarity.

(4) Bolster local defense forces of non-Communist Asian countries with simplified military equipment to insure maintenance of internal security.

(5) Maintain collective security arrangements and quick-reacting, mobile, U.S. tactical forces prepared to move to any threatened area.

(6) Encourage economic development and stable governments by improving the air transportation network of selected Asian nations. This network would at the same time draw the country into a more homogeneous group and provide means for the central government to move troops rapidly to any threatened area.

(7) Seek an international arms control agreement which would reduce the economic burden of military expenditures without jeopardizing the security of the Free World.

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4. (S) PHASE II - Communist China has a considerable nuclear capability but poses no direct threat to the United States.

a. During this period the CHICOMs may use their nuclear capability militarily as well as politically. Their foreign policies will become more aggressive and adventuristic, with emphasis on "nuclear blackmail" of other Asian countries, particularly Taiwan and Korea, and possibly Japan, India, and Pakistan.

b. U.S. strategy during this period, in addition to developing further the strategy of PHASE I should:

(1) Make clear that CHICOM possession of a nuclear capability in no way diminishes U.S. resolve to deal swiftly and resolutely with any aggression.

(2) Encourage Japan, India, Taiwan, and possibly Korea, Pakistan, and the Philippines to arm themselves with U.S. offensive nuclear missile systems provided through sales or grants. Japan should be encouraged to become a leader in Asia in building strategic counter-military capabilities.

(3) Strengthen the strategic vise by establishing coordinating mechanisms to insure a concerted regional nuclear response to any major CHICOM aggression.

(4) Exploit any cleavages in Sino-Soviet relations that appear as a result of independent CHICOM actions that challenge Russian leadership. In this situation, some level of accommodation with one side or the other may well be possible. The CHICOMs may attempt to incite war between the U.S. and the USSR, seeing this as one way to gain CHICOM mastery of the world. Alternately, for the same reasons, the Russians may try to incite war between the CHICOMs and the U.S. The U.S. aim must be to see that any such war occurs between the CHICOMs and the Russians.

5. (S) PHASE III - Communist China has a capability to attack directly the United States.

a. Once the CHICOMs acquire an independent ability to attack the United States with nuclear weapons and inflict substantial damage, they become a general war enemy of this nation. If friendly or neutral powers are to remain in Southeast Asia, the Free World must develop a global response to any CHICOM aggression.

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(1) This strategy must apply the same sanctions to CHICOM aggression that now apply to Soviet aggression in Europe: any overt major aggression leads to general war.

(2) The strategy of global response must be predicated on Free World aerospace forces which surround the Communist Bloc and present a credible response to any aggression. During this period, the strategic vise must become a strategic envelope. Missile bases located in Japan, Taiwan, India, the Philippine Islands, and other Asian nations, together with U.S. and European strategic offensive forces, will provide a strategic ring confronting the Communist Bloc. This ring will become an envelope through use of space systems that provide surveillance and warning of enemy activities, as well as platforms to accomplish offensive and defensive tasks.

(3) More important than ever will be the necessity for the U.S. to exploit any Sino-Soviet differences.

6. (S) The success of this evolutionary strategy depends upon achieving the means to carry it out and the ability to make it credible. The difficulties of providing the means are well known. More attention, however, should be paid to the attainment of credibility. In 16 words Mao Tse-Tung has distilled the essence of CHICOM strategy for the "protracted conflict". "Enemy advances, we retreat; enemy halts, we harass; enemy tires, we attack, enemy retreats, we pursue." To be credible against adversaries who think this way, U.S. strategy must provide the nation with a platform of military strength which will permit the U.S. to take the political and economic initiative in the cold war. Otherwise, the initiative passes to the enemy. There is no stalemate. Consequently, political leaders must increasingly recognize how the control and use of military power in peace, along the lines briefly developed above, can make a vital contribution to maintenance of the Free World security.

7. (S) Based on the above analysis, the following preliminary conclusions reflect possible actions to be undertaken:

a. To inhibit CHICOM capability to exploit its potential nuclear capabilities, it may be timely to persuade selected Asian nations, particularly Japan and India, to consider equipping themselves with defensive nuclear weapons.

b. Negotiations should be commenced to indicate U.S. willingness to provide Australia with an offensive nuclear capability.

c.. Possible methods to exploit any fissures in the Sino-Soviet relationships should be thoroughly investigated.

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d. Methods and organizational frameworks should be investigated to insure that U.S. political leaders control and use the national military capabilities to seize the initiative in the cold war.

8. (S) The above summary represents current Directorate of Plans views on the long-range threat of Communist China. These views are under constant review and refinement. As more intelligence on Red China becomes available, as China's development progresses, and as world power trends become more clear, modifications in the preliminary analysis above will probably be required to consider other strategic alternatives.

9. (U) This letter is classified SECRET because it contains information the unauthorized disclosure of which could result in serious damage to the defense interests of the nation.

John K. Gerhart
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Deputy Chief of Staff,
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Ltr frm AFCCS, dtd 9 Jan 61

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.



REPLY TO
ATTN OF: AFCCS

SUBJECT: Long-Range Threat of Communist China

9 January 1961

TO: AFXDC (Gen Gerhart)

We should be having a look at the long-range threat of Communist China. It is possible that within the next 5 years China could become an ICBM power - certainly within 10 years. What should the U.S., and particularly what should the Air Force strategy vis-a-vis Communist China be?

Thomas D. White
THOMAS D. WHITE
Chief of Staff

cc: General LeMay

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